

TITLE:

Children and Families Service 2019-20 Full Year Report to Members

COUNCIL DATE

27th January 2021

CLASSIFICATION:

Open

If exempt, the reason will be listed in the main body of this report.

WARD(S) AFFECTED

All

GROUP DIRECTOR

Anne Canning

Group Director, Children and Education

1. SUMMARY

Children's services in Hackney work in partnership to protect children and keep them safe from harm and help them thrive. The Children and Families' Service is the key service designed to protect children by working with families to support safe and effective parenting where children are at risk of significant harm. Where it is not possible for children to be safely cared for within their family network, the local authority will look after those children. This full year report provides Members with oversight of activities within the Children and Families' Service including performance updates and information about key service developments and information about vulnerable adolescents and adoption. The report also includes information on Young Hackney, the Council's early help, prevention and diversion service for children and young people aged 6-19 years old and up to 25 years if the young person has a special education need or disability. Information on the Service's work with children and young people through Hackney of Tomorrow (Hackney's Children in Care Council) is included in the report. The report also provides a summary of the Children and Families Service progress against the Ofsted Action Plan. This report has previously been presented to Cabinet on 30th November 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council note the report.

3. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES

This annual report covers the period 2019/20.

The outturn for 2019/20 for the Children and Families Service on a net budget of £59.3m was an overspend of £2.1m after use of grants and reserves of £4.9m including a drawdown on the Commissioning Reserve of £2.3m. There has been a requirement to draw down from the Commissioning Reserve since 2012/13 due to the increased number of children in care and a shortage of in-house foster carers. The financial position for 2020/21 is a net budget of £60m for the Children and Families Service, and the service is forecasting to overspend by £3.3m (as at August 2020) after use of reserves and drawdown of grants totalling £5.9m (including full use of the commissioning activity reserve of £3.9m).

The Children and Families Service has continued to make significant contributions to the efficiency agenda of the Council. Over the previous eight years the service has delivered £11.5m savings with a further £60k being delivered in 2020/21. The increase in commissioning costs has been driven by an increase in the number of looked after children since 2011/12, and this trend looks to continue through 2020/21. There is a continuation of a large proportion of children being placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) due to a lack of suitable in-house foster carers. The cost of an IFA placement is significantly greater than that of an in-house placement.

Hackney has also seen an increase in residential placements since 2015 adding considerable budget pressures with an average annual unit cost of £200k. We are also seeing a rise in the number of under 18s in high-cost semi-independent placements. Where young people in their late teens are deemed to be vulnerable, and in many cases are transitioning from residential to semi-independent placements, they may still require a high-level of support and in extreme circumstances bespoke crisis packages. These pressures have been recognised by the Group Director of Finance & Corporate Resources with a growth of £9.5m in total included in the budget.

4. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

The report raises no specific legal issues.

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None

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